

Builder/Architect



**Portfolio Properties Fine Homes:
Building on Family Tradition**

Portfolio Properties Fine Homes: Building on Family Tradition

By TJ Neale

Make no mistake — building and designing are in John L. Rogers' blood. His grandfather, Frank, immigrated to the Brighton Park (Illinois) area in 1923 and began buying farmland. Soon that venture expanded into building and

buying apartment buildings. The F.G. Lucas Co. became a prominent player on Chicago's south side. Rogers' father, John E., followed family tradition by investing in properties in the growing western suburbs.

"I've been preparing all my life for where I am right now," Rogers said, referring to his position as President of both Portfolio Properties and Portfolio Properties Fine Homes. "When I was about 10, I got a drafting table and T-square. I spent hours sketching the grand old homes in our neigh-

On the Cover:

John Rogers, President, Portfolio Properties Fine Homes, is pictured on the back deck of his model home in Sterling Ridge, a community in Orland Park.

The great room of the Turnberry model has it all. Open to dining room and gourmet kitchen, it features beautiful hardwood floors, arched Jeld-Wen windows, a two-story stone fireplace and a convenient wet bar.





PHOTO BY DENNIS CRANE PHOTOGRAPHERS

The spacious gourmet kitchen has everything: plenty of cabinets, state-of-the-art appliances and access to the large outdoor living space and backyard.

borhood and designing my own dream homes. As a teen, I worked for my father doing maintenance and painting in the various buildings we owned.”

Rogers earned his real estate license at age 18. After graduating from college and finishing business school, he landed a position at a high-profile commercial real estate advisory firm in Washington, DC. That job, he says, was anything but a dream, and in a year’s time he was back in Chicago. By 2001, he had taken over Portfolio Properties, a dormant family company, and began building a thriving specialty brokerage business for developers and brokers. By 2003, the company, based in Homer Glen, IL, was working on its own development projects.

“My father, who is a lawyer and accountant, continues to be an important part of the business. His decades of real estate, legal and business experience are invaluable when we

acquire a new piece of land, annex and incorporate existing land and bring projects before local municipalities.”

In addition to his father, he also places great trust in Executive Assistant and Office Manager Marge Gielczewski. “Marge’s job description continues to grow — she’s our permit expeditor and engineer/architect/project manager/vendor liaison. She holds property, casualty, life and health insurance licenses and recently earned her real estate license. She’s an invaluable asset,” he said.

Rogers holds numerous credentials as well. He is currently a licensed broker, Graduate of the Realtor Institute (GRI), Certified New Home Salesperson (CSP) through the National Association of Home Builders, member of the International Council of Shopping Centers and holds a B.A. and MBA. He is also a member of the Architectural Review Committee for the Village of Homer Glen and sits on the



PHOTO BY DENNIS CRANE PHOTOGRAPHERS

The luxurious master bath in the Turnberry model features a glass-enclosed walk-in shower and a garden jetted tub.

board of directors of the Southwest Suburban Home Builders Association (SSHBA).

BACK TO THE DRAWING BOARD

As Portfolio Properties Fine Homes continued to grow, Rogers, who minored in urban planning while at school, was drawn back toward the design and building side of the industry. “To me, the most rewarding part of this business is the process of building a home. In most cases, we’re building a dream. I love the collaborative process. We start with an empty site and transform it into something unique and special for the client that will last for decades.”

Clients today, Rogers says, have usually done a lot of homework on the Internet and often come to him with an attitude of “just give me a price.” The first meeting involves educating prospective clients about the difference between price and value. “We pride

ourselves on our unyielding commitment to quality. We offer our clients the best quality of materials, energy efficiency, new building techniques and Old World craftsmanship. Portfolio’s clients recognize and demand quality, and that’s what we deliver.”

Delivering that quality takes time and begins long before construction begins. It begins with discussions about spending more upfront to reduce energy consumption later and how the home will be used. Is it “the” dream home? Is it a stepping stone on the way to a future home? Once a level of trust has been established, Rogers asks his clients a series of questions and even drives them around neighborhoods to discover their tastes. Working with an extensive file of existing drawings, an architect then creates a custom plan that takes the features of the building site into consideration. “We let the natural world dictate the building, paying particular attention to sunrises and sunsets.”

Rogers pays close attention to his clients' sense of style as well. His homes sometimes include one-of-a-kind masonry arches or inlaid floors crafted from rare wood or reclaimed timber. Each home is unique and reflects the personality of its owners. During construction, a client will meet with design specialists to plan specialized spaces (a wine cellar, spa/sauna or in-ground pool, for example) and to choose elements such as flooring, cabinets and millwork. Clients visiting their home sites during the build will encounter John LeGrand, Project Manager for Portfolio Properties Fine Homes.

LeGrand, a well-known and respected builder in the Orland Park area, is a principal in the company as well as the project manager. "John's been in the business for more than 30 years. He's had training and experience in engineering, mechanics, sales, construction and management. His past projects include commercial buildings and more than 200 homes. He's more than my project manager; he's my mentor and partner. I trust his judgment completely," Rogers explained.

CONTINUED GROWTH

As Portfolio Properties Fine Homes continues to mature, that facet of the business is moving from building individual homes to developing entire subdivisions to building all the homes in that subdivision. "We're not production builders, we're project builders. The site dictates the design of the house and the design of the development — we let the actual ground determine what kind of home will be built. We don't have two floor plans and seven elevations to choose from. We start with the site and then listen to what our clients want."

With an architect's plans in hand, Rogers turns to trusted subcontractors, many of whom have longtime relationships with Portfolio. "Excellence in their performance is our first priority; pricing is second."

Rogers, LeGrand and Portfolio Properties Fine Homes' team of subcontractors are currently occupied at Sterling Ridge, an 82-lot site in Orland Park being developed by Portfolio Properties. They've recently completed five homes in the subdivision, with 20 more in some stage of construction.

The Turnberry model home by Portfolio Properties Fine Homes is located in Sterling Ridge, an Orland Park community.





John Rogers, President, Portfolio Properties Fine Homes (left), with John LeGrand, Project Manager

Homes range from the \$700s to over \$1 million, with additional home sites in Lemont, Frankfort and Burr Ridge, IL.

LOOKING FORWARD

As land values in the Chicago area and other metropolitan areas continue to climb, Rogers envisions that buyers will continue to demand the best in quality and features but will be content to build on smaller sites. He believes that developments in the future will set aside more community space and offer amenities to compensate for the smaller lots. "I also think you will continue to see real demand for larger, more unique suburban townhomes and vertical housing that is convenient to railroad transit."

Whether building a single-family home on a half-acre

home site or an elegant townhome community, Portfolio Properties Fine Homes will continue to build on its tradition of offering the highest quality while maintaining and enhancing the natural elements of the land. ■



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